For Immediate Release April 17, 2013

Contact: Rob Blumenthal (202) 224-1010 / Eve Goldsher (202) 224-3751

Link to Audio download and link to Video download

CHAIRWOMAN MIKULSKI REMARKS AT LABOR-HHS HEARING ON THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S FY14 BUDGET REQUEST

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the full Senate Appropriations Committee, today participated in a Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on the Department of Education's Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request. The following are Chairwoman Mikulski's remarks, as prepared for delivery:

"I would like to thank Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran for having today's hearing on the Fiscal Year 2014 Department of Education budget. It's a tough budget year. We must be frugal, but not at the expense of gifted and talented students, children with special needs, and college students.

"The Department of Education is critical to our nation's continued prosperity and is responsible for initiatives that address the most compelling human needs. The Department promotes student achievement, prepares students for global competitiveness, and ensures equal access to quality education.

"I'd like to commend Secretary Duncan for his outstanding work and his many accomplishments. I am particularly pleased with his signature initiative, Race to the Top, which encouraged reforms by expanding charter schools and enhancing technology. I am so proud of the work Secretary Duncan has done, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the coming years.

"The Secretary has discussed how damaging sequester is. I said this at the Defense hearing I just attended, and I'll say it again here. I support the President's budget request level of \$1.058 trillion. This level is the same as the deal we made three months ago in the American Taxpayer Relief Act, which passed the Senate 89 to 8. A deal should be a deal. In contrast, the Ryan budget would be at \$966 billion. This is \$92 billion less than the President's request. We need a balanced approach to end sequester that includes both revenues and targeted cuts so we can sustain our competitiveness and invest in the future of America.

"I also strongly support the President's 'Preschool for All' proposal. This would provide all four year-old children from low and moderate income households with high-quality preschool while incentivizing states to expand these types of programs to reach additional children from middle-class families, as well as establish full-day kindergarten policies.

"As former Chair of the Children and Families HELP Subcommittee, access to high-quality early childhood care is something I looked very closely at. I held numerous hearings on the subject, and the evidence was clear that high-quality early childhood care is one of the most significant investments we can make.

"The President proposes to fund this initiative by raising the federal cigarette tax from \$1.01 per pack to \$1.95 per pack. Doing so would raise \$78 billion for pre-kindergarten programs, while also accomplishing an important public health goal -- reducing cigarette use, especially in young people.

"I look forward to hearing more about this proposal, and working to ensure that universal prekindergarten is not just a budget proposal, but a reality for all of America's children.

"With respect to the rest of the budget, I am encouraged by what I see. The President's fiscal year 2014 budget continues to make strong investments in education. I am pleased funding was increased for Promise Neighborhoods and Pell Grant awards. The budget increases the maximum award for Pell Grant recipients from \$5,550 to \$5,645. This will help more than 9.7 million students nationwide. In Maryland, this will help 120,000 students realize their dream of higher education.

"However, I am disappointed to see funding decreased for IDEA Part B, which is vital in providing services to children with special needs and families to ensure they are given the opportunity to be independent, contributing members of society. With sequester in effect, Maryland alone loses \$9.7 million in funding, putting 120 special education teachers, aides, and staff at risk of losing their jobs, which will lead to diminished services for children with disabilities.

"I am also disappointed to see no support for gifted and talented children. Gifted and talented education was last funded in Fiscal Year 2010, and I am concerned that these kids will get left behind. I would like to work with Secretary Duncan to make sure we continue to support these students.

"I look forward to hearing Secretary Duncan's testimony, and working together in the coming weeks and months to develop a fiscally responsible budget. I also look forward to working with Labor, HHS, Education Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran, as well as Full Committee Vice Chairman Shelby as we return to regular order for fiscal year 2014."